

Hi, I'm Candice McQueen, and I want to share more information with you about a new way the Tennessee Department of Education is making sure our students are truly prepared when they graduate from high school.

Every graduate should be proud of their diploma, and we want every student to be able to take that diploma and seamlessly move into their next step – whether that's enrolling in college or heading into the workforce or military.

Right now, many of our students are not ready and not equipped with the skills they need, whether that's technical expertise and knowledge, resilience to work through challenges, or college credits that can be accepted at any university or TCAT in the state. Instead, many of our students end up taking remedial classes, work in low-wage jobs, or leave college after their first year.

That's something we want to change, and that's why we're introducing new accountability measure called the Ready Graduate, which will help to ensure that all students have the opportunity to become fully equipped for their next step while they are still in high school.

The Ready Graduate metric looks for students who have met at least one of four indicators. This tells us that a student is prepared for life after high school and able to seamlessly enroll in postsecondary education and enter the workplace or the military.

There are four different measures of success:

- The first is having a 21 or higher on the ACT or the equivalent on the SAT. This reflects the eligibility criteria for Tennessee's HOPE scholarship and admission into our university system.
- The second and third pathways look for the experiences students can have in high school that equip them for the next level. We want every school to have a diverse portfolio of early postsecondary opportunities, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual credit or dual enrollment courses, as well as work-based learning opportunities and chances to earn industry credentials. If students complete four of these opportunities, or if they complete two early postsecondary courses and earn an industry credential, they would be considered a Ready Graduate.

- The fourth pathway option is for students to demonstrate military readiness with the completion of two early postsecondary courses and scoring at or above Tennessee's designated score on the military entrance exam.

All of these pathways will ensure a Tennessee graduate is ready for what's next so they can have options as they leave high school and follow their chosen path. This is our goal for Ready Graduate accountability indicator.

The Ready Graduate indicator will be in effect for the first time in the 2017-18 school year. Over the next few months, we will share more details about the exact methodology we will use to calculate the Ready Graduate indicator ahead of releasing results for the first time in the fall of 2018. Even more importantly, we will continue to share resources and reminders with district leaders about funding that's available and opportunities to scale up early postsecondary offerings.

We are excited about this new indicator for Tennessee's schools and believe the Ready Graduate metric will drive a statewide focus on readiness for postsecondary, military, and the workforce. Our hope is it incentivizes schools to create more opportunities that help students maximize their time in high school so they can seamlessly transition into their next stage. We're excited to see what doors this will open for Tennessee's graduates.